Flotation machine in operation 2018 (photo: RFD).

22. The Organic Remains

The early excavators of Thorikos paid limited attention to organic materials, and only one set of ecological data has been published so far. In a compartment below a staircase southeast of Tower 3 (probably a toilet space), sealed by the broken blocks of the stairs, a deposit of pottery, charcoal, animal bones and shell dating to the late 5th century BC was investigated. Apart from two mollusks, some 40 bones of birds, pig and sheep or goat were identified and interpreted as the remains of meals. During recent excavations, more attention has been paid to the collection of organic remains that may provide insights regarding daily life and agricultural activities in ancient Thorikos. Shell material was collected during the surface survey as well – this cannot be dated very precisely, but it may indicate otherwise unexpected links. This is the case f.ex. with a large *tridacna* shell found on the acropolis: originating in the Red Sea, it was probably brought here during the Early Iron Age, as similar cases f.ex. on Samos, Rhodos, Aegina

Tridacna shell from the Thorikos survey, width 20.3 cm (TF13.725, photo montage: KVG)

and at Perachora and Olympia indicate. Currently, several reports on mollusks, plant remains and animal and human bones are being prepared for publication. Apart from dry-sieving, systematic sampling by flotation has been introduced: by stirring archaeological soil samples in water, seeds and charcoal will float while other organic materials (such as bones and teeth) can more easily be retrieved for study as well. A flotation machine has therefore been constructed, and is proving essential for the mechanized processing of large numbers of soil samples.

LK, EY, EM, FJ, RFD

References: Gautier 1967; Mussche 1967, 65-68; Reese and Sease 1993.